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Liberty without Licentiousness.

IN

TWO LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

Wm Taylor
see H & L

Wherefore, come out from among them; and be ye **SEPARATE**,
saith the **LORD**, 2 Cor. vi. 16.

For, Brethren, you have been **CALLED** unto **LIBERTY**; only
use not Liberty for an **OCCASION** to the **FLESH**, Gal. v. 13.

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Liberty without Licentiousness.

LETTER I.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE received yours, and considered its contents. It gives me singular pleasure, to perceive you turning your attention to religion, and considering, in such a serious light, the connections you form by church fellowship. Beyond all doubt, this is a matter of the very greatest importance. Not only yourself, but your family, and other relations may be involved in the measure; and, of consequence, if you be not directed by the word of God, but suffer yourself to be imposed upon by the devices of men, you may be instrumental of the greatest mischief to those for whom you would wish to do the greatest good. Hence the singular need of the counsel of Heaven for your direction: and as you cannot be too deliberate, in weighing all matters before you determine, to prevent future reflections, I hope you are much given to prayer, and consultation of the scriptures, for wisdom to guide you into *all truth*.

It is now fashionable, you know, to employ the epistolary form of writing, almost upon any subject, and by your present application, you are determined I shall be in the fashion for once. Well, be it so; I am ready to do any thing to oblige my friend. And if I satisfy your mind, upon any of these questions you have put to me for answer, I shall feel very little uneasiness although I trespass rule in the mode of writing.

As you are a plain man, and truth is always most amiable, in her simplest attire, I shall study as much plainness as I can. I know, too, you are an honest man, willing to be directed, in *every* thing, by what is truth, and on this account, I write you in the simplicity of my heart. Had I any suspicion of the contrary, you may rest assured, your epistle would have remained unanswered by me. For nothing, you must know, is more fruitless or discouraging, than to attempt to convince that man of his errors, who hath espoused opinions, he knows not how; but, because he hath espoused them, is determined to abide by, and propagate them, at all hazards. Were this a rare case, I should not have mentioned it, or had it been peculiar to the giddy, ignorant and thoughtless, who are always caught with new things, whatever be their absurdities. But even of the seriously disposed, there are not a few, whom it is as impossible to convince of their inconsistencies, particularly in *church-fellowship*, as to remove mountains, although they have not one solid argument to adduce in their own vindication. Nay, which is more extraordinary still, even force of argument, and *conviction* of mind, although acknowledged by them, are sometimes insufficient to make them change their connections.

Although, however, I have a very different opinion of you, yet it is best to adjust all matters in our out-setting. Upon this express condition then, I open this short correspondence. I promise to advance nothing without assigning my reasons. You will weigh the force of each of them. You will consider, if you have any thing of equal or more weight to counterbalance them. If you have, by all means hold by what is right. If not, instead of giving them up, or simply acknowledging the truth of my arguments, you will confess the goodness of my cause, and act accordingly.—Upon these conditions, I

proceed to give you such an answer to your questions, as appears to me, most agreeable to the mind of the Holy Ghost in the scriptures, and most consistent with the liberty whereby Christ maketh his people free.

Quest. 1. What are your sentiments concerning the constitution of the church of Scotland?

If I am to understand you, of the constitution according to the *standards* of that church, before patronage made any part of her laws, I would say, "In my opinion it comes as near the model of the church in the New Testament, and practised in the beginning of Christianity, as any church on earth." You cannot expect me to be minute in the detail of articles here.—I refer you to the Confession of Faith, the Catechisms, the Form of Presbyterian government, &c. and request you, with the Bible in your hand, to study all these, with the quotations from scripture by which they are established.

In these authorised standards of our church you will perceive, that her *doctrines* are evangelical, and correspond remarkably with the word of God; her *worship* is simple, and much suited to the spirituality of the gospel of Christ; the form of her *government*, by kirk-sessions, in subordination to presbyteries, and these again to synods, whether provincial or general, all constituted in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, her *alone* sovereign, and head, without any superiority of King, pope or prelate, over her in these, has a mighty influence upon the preservation of purity in her doctrine, and good order among all her members: and the regulations and laws enacted by her, for the due and impartial exercise of discipline upon all in her communion, is likewise a very strong security against the introduction, either of error in her doctrines, or irregularities in the behaviour of her members.

Now, Sir, you will be pleased very carefully to

remark this, that you see, in your Confession, the government and discipline of the church are as much sanctioned by the word of God, as her doctrine and worship. They are, of consequence, as sacred in the sight of Heaven. The disregard of his word concerning these, must be as dishonouring unto him. You are to have your conscience as deeply impressed, with the authority of God calling you to regard and protect them. And therefore (I appeal to yourself for the justice of the inference) are you not to consider the man, or description of men, who would persuade you to overlook or undervalue the government and discipline of the church of Christ, as immaterial matters, to be as really the enemies of the glory of your Redeemer, and the interest of his kingdom, as if they were denying the atonement, or any other fundamental article of our faith? And the reason is obvious: because the government and discipline of the church of Christ are the guardians of these doctrines: and if you murder the guardians, the *charge* itself will soon be lost. Nay, sir, let me tell you this also; those have commonly been found enemies at *heart*, to the doctrines of our church, who have been most forward in slighting her government and discipline.

The people in general, I know dont see this, and therefore are so easily imposed upon by the *designing*; but could they discern its fatal tendency to religion, I am persuaded they would recoil back from the destructive scheme with horror.—Although I know you have more good sense, than to be so easily beguiled, yet you will have patience with me, while I shew you, in a few sentences, that it is from an abuse of the government, and want of administration of the discipline of the church, that the *most*, if not *all* the evils in our national establishment have arisen. And therefore, if the contempt or abuse of *these*, characterize any *other* religious society among us, similar, or worse evils, must be expected to follow.

If, in our establishment, a due respect had been paid to the government of the church, the sacred privilege, of choosing their own pastors, granted by the Lord Jesus Christ to her members, as *such*, would have been preserved inviolate. By admonition, reproof, rebuke, suspension, and excommunication, like the Church of Ephesus *, she could have shewn, that she neither *could* nor would *bear them who are evil*. By impartial trial of them *who say they are apostles*, that is, ministers of Christ, *and are not*, upon finding them *liars*, she would have finally rejected them. And who sees not that the church of Christ hath full powers, by the due exercise of her government and discipline, in this manner to maintain purity, consistency and regularity among all her ministers and people?

But hath this been the case with us? O no! By subjecting the government of the church to the law of patronage, and neglecting the due exercise of her discipline, hirelings, *who care not for the flock*, have been introduced. Her doctrines have become corrupted. Violent and arbitrary measures have disgraced the meetings of her rulers. And so weak and contemptible hath she now become, by the sacrifice she hath made of her own privileges, that, were it not for the aids of civil power, she could proceed scarcely a single step, in the exercise of that authority and discipline against offenders that belongs to her of right. Thus "her towers have brought her into great waters; the East wind hath broken her, in the midst of the seas †. They have broken down her hedges, so that all they who pass by the way do pluck her. The Boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it ‡." Now, Sir, what is the obvious conclusion from this statement? Most undoubtedly, that similar causes must produce similar effects. That society, that subverts the govern-

* Rev. ii. 2. † Ezek. xxvii. 26. ‡ Psal lxxx. 12, 13.

ment and discipline of the House of God, must bring ruin upon their own heads and all who are connected with them. And if they want the aids of an establishment, to keep them together, so much the more rapid must be their innovations and perversions of the various parts of the comely order of the Church.

The truth is, this admirable constitution, like a well constructed garrison, gives beauty, strength and consistency to all its parts. Every bastion and redoubt is necessary, not one of them can be wanted. Not one of them must be neglected; else you expose the fortification. Nay, you make a breach to the enemy's hand, and tamely stand still, till you behold him in possession of it. The case, in my opinion, is exactly thus. Relax the government and discipline of the Church of Christ, or persuade people, that the word of God, concerning these are such *circumstantial small things*, that they may be overlooked; and you act precisely the part of the governor, who would harangue his soldiers thus.

" Altho', my lads, the enemy be hovering around
 " the walls, and watching all your motions with
 " the strictest care, yet you need not mind the out-
 " works nor batteries. You may save yourselves
 " the fatigue of working the artillery. You may
 " quit your stations, and cease from defending the
 " walls. These fortifications are small inconfide-
 " rate things, which you need not mind. The ex-
 " ercises of defending them separate you from
 " one another, disturb your peace, and interrupt
 " your enjoyments. Soldiers, you are free men,
 " you must not be bound. Liberty, liberty is the
 " thing! quit your posts: and, as loving brethren,
 " sit all down at your *common table*, and enjoy the
 " privileges and plentiful supplies you have *within*
 " the garrison."

You would certainly reckon such a man more fit for bedlam as a lunatic, or for being hanged for a

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traitor, than to have the command of a city against an enemy. Whatever love he pretended to have for his men, he actually betrayed them; neither he nor they discovered much love to the honours and interest of their prince: and as to the *advantages* of complying with his counsel the event will declare. The walls thus neglected were soon levelled with the ground. The city was taken, and plundered. And the poor soldiers who had rioted in licentiousness, instead of Liberty, were made *slaves*, and as the result of their *love* feast, their provision, mixed and corrupted at the pleasure of the enemy, was served out to them in such small allowances as their new masters thought proper.—The application is so easy, that he that runs may read. This only I request of you however: Dont be too hard upon the frantic governor, and in the abuse of *Catholic love*, countenance and cherish such men as are acting the same licentious farce in the matters of religion. Under the pretence of reformation and liberty, the poor unthinking people are imposed upon, while every nerve is straining to betray and overthrow the various parts of the constitution of our Church. I only hint these things at present. Upon a subsequent question I will be more explicit, and give you my reasons for what I say.

Quest. H. What are the evils in a church that render separation from her not only necessary, but a most indispensable duty?

This question, as I think, is of the greatest magnitude; and, in your circumstances, I am persuaded, you will consider it as such. For my part, I hold myself an avowed enemy to separation from a church, except in cases of the greatest necessity. Any thing else is schism, is a most wanton *abuse* of liberty. And to guard against this evil every minister, according to the rules of our church, is taken bound at ordination to follow no schismatical or divisive

courses. A most serious hint, indeed, to those ministers in the R—f, who left their charges in the Establishment, without either assigning their reasons for such an extraordinary piece of conduct, or giving in their demission in a regular form ! and a no less stumbling reflection upon the friends of that scheme, who so far encouraged them in what I had almost called perjury, (at least it is breach of faith) as to admit them, in these circumstances, into their society, and submit to their ministry ! They are certainly partakers with them in their sin. If this be *their* liberty, may I ever be kept at the greatest distance from such *licentiousness* ! One of the greatest scourges to mankind I know, is liberty run mad.

While a church is willing to do every thing to promote the interests of the kingdom of Christ, nothing can be more improper, or destructive of good order of every kind, than separation from her. It would be a singular insult to her exalted Head ; it would be a most pernicious example to the unthinking people ; and altho', like all new things, which, however bad in themselves, commonly make a noise, and have plenty of followers for a little ; yet such steps of disorder have no countenance from the word of God. It is only in cases then of the most urgent necessity, such as the reformation from popery, the deliverance of our church from prelacy, &c. that separation from a church is duty, or for the interests of Jesus Christ. For God is not the God of confusion, but of order, as in all the churches.

But to your question more directly. You will be pleased to recollect, Sir, what I have already said concerning the *constitution* of the Church of Scotland, in answer to your first question. Being agreeable unto, and founded upon the word of God, whenever a church leaves this constitution, I ask you, is it not full time to leave her communion ? This is the true state of the case. To renounce all connection with such as overturn her constitution is not

leaving the church, I maintain, which is such a stumbling-block to many, but a close *adherence* to her. These, and these only, who subvert the interests of the church, are the persons who *leave* her. Whenever therefore the ministers of a church are proved to be unsound in the faith, and are countenanced and protected in their errors; whenever the people are deprived of the privilege of calling their own pastor, and erroneous men are violently pushed into the place of the minister of Christ; whenever the church becomes so crowded with men of corrupt minds, that a majority is secured to carry every thing against the friends of truth and religion; whenever the courts are directed in their measures, not by scriptural argument, or the laws of Jesus Christ, but by the laws of the land, although contrary to these, or mere force of voting from a consciousness of superiority in numbers; whenever the winning and persuasive voice of the Truth, as it is in Jesus, is disregarded, and every attempt hath been used, by complaint, petition, remonstrance and appeal, to produce a change of measures, and reformation in doctrine, but all to no purpose: then, I I appeal to you, Sir, I appeal to every devout and sober man, I appeal to the whole world, if the friends of the Lord Jesus Christ, be not warranted, nay called, loudly called upon, and that too in the most solemn manner, quickly to separate from such a church, and take the most scriptural measures to preserve the glorious gospel in its purity, and transmit entire all the privileges of the kingdom of Christ to a succeeding race? This is the liberty which I heartily applaud, and adduce these texts as so many commands of God to this effect. Rom. xvi. 17. "Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them who "cause," that is propagate, "divisions and offences," are the authors of divisive and erroneous principles, "contrary to the doctrine which you have learned;

"and avoid them," have no communion with them. 2 Cor. vi. 7. "Wherefore come out from among them," namely, the propagators of false and erroneous worship, and "be ye separated," that is, keep quite *distinct* from them, "saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you." 2 Thess. iii. 6. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," O how solemn! "that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly"—including erroneous and unscriptural practices in the church as well as private scandals, "and not after the tradition which he received of us," concerning doctrine as well as practice, chap. ii. 15. "Therefore, brethren, *stand fast*, and *hold* the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." Tit. iii. 10. "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject;" and if *one* heretic, certainly that church where the *majority* are heretical. See also 2 John verse 10, 11. Rev. xviii. 4, &c.

Such as I have stated above, you have complained to me, is the present condition of our Establishment, and yet I have been amazed you have continued so long in her communion. All complaints, petitions, remonstrances, and appeals have been in vain; and therefore, as the only remaining remedy, separation from her is a most incumbent duty upon every lover of the Lord Jesus Christ, and advocate for the preservation of his truths and ordinances upon the earth. And these are my reasons. (1.) Because a majority of her ministers do not preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Error is so dangerous and ruining to the souls of men, that no consideration can compensate the loss of sound doctrine; and of consequence no consideration ought to influence people to run the risk of it, by continuing in communion with such as propagate error.

(2.) Because a most awful curse is denounced a

gainst such as preach any other gospel, than that in our Bibles, and exhibited in our Confession. And therefore, by continuing in communion with that church, where error is the common doctrine, you run the dreadful risk of having that tremendous curse entailed upon yourself, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed," Gal. i. 9.

(3.) Because my Christian liberties are too valuable to be lost. The right of calling my spiritual guide, according to the scriptures, Acts i. 15.—26. and xiv. 23. 2 Cor. viii. 19. The enjoyment of all ministerial services, from such as have hereby the evidences of the call of God; and to sit under the care of such as, instead of violent or oppressive measures, exercise the government of the church according to the scriptures, and administer discipline with impartiality, to detect and cast out the erroneous, and promote holiness and good order in the church. These are privileges too valuable to be lost, and for the enjoyment of such *liberties* this is my path of duty. Chapels of ease, and popular helpers in parishes, &c may satisfy the unthinking, but is no remedy against the evil.

(4.) Because I am expressly commanded of God to come out of such a church, and be *separated*. 2 Cor. vi. 17. Rom. xvi. 17. 2 Thess ii. 15. and iii. 6. Tit. iii. 10, &c. &c.

(5) Because my example may be a snare to others. And what a serious reflection this! Nay, our continuance in that church, where the majority are unsound, is an encouragement to them to drive on in their measures.

(6.) Because, instead of helping, we are withholding our influence from our friends, *without* the church, who, under many disadvantages, are struggling hard in defence of the unalienable prerogatives of the King of Zion, and the purity of his gos-

pel, and who must, no doubt, be greatly discouraged by your backwardness, while they are fighting the Lord's battles in the highest places of the field. That is a most serious imprecation in the book of Judges, chap. v. 23. and how far it applies in the present case, I leave it with you to judge. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof: because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

"O but, say you, there is an honest party in the church! It is with these *only* I hold communion. I hold communion with no other. And were it not for them, I would have left her long ago. For, to tell you the truth, I am as much against legal preachers as you can be." Now, Sir, are you really in earnest in what you say? To me, you appear to be in jest, for I know you are a man of better sense, than to be serious in such an objection. But supposing you to be in earnest, I beg leave to reply, that as the objection consists of two parts, the extent of your communion, and the implicit obedience you yield to the example of men, I shall attempt a short answer to each of them.

As to the first, "you hold communion only with the honest party." This, Sir, is absolutely a *blind*, a mere imposition, both upon the conscience and understanding of any man. The church of Scotland is surely no more than *one* church. Of consequence, there is no more, there can be no more than *one* communion or fellowship in her. All the members of that church can have no more than one Communion-Table: and although I grant you there be a most melancholy disagreement, as to the *object* of their adoration in the sacramental supper, yet they are all united in one church fellowship. It is very true indeed, before you join in communion with any, you *ought* to be *agreed* about the object of

your worship: whether he be a God or a creature. This is common sense. It is obvious to the meanest capacity. But if you continue in a church where such confusion is to be found, *who* is to blame? For most undoubtedly the communion table in the High Church of Paisley, for instance, and in the established Church at Ayr, is the very same. Dr. M'Gill and you, sit at the same table! and how acceptable the sight of such close intercourse, between you and such a *determined* enemy to his glory, must be to your adorable Lord, I leave it with you to decide.

"These things no doubt, say you, are very serious: but I cannot think yet, that I hold any communion with those men" O, Sir, do not, under the influence of prejudice, contradict common sense. Are you not in the same church? connected together in the same establishment? And in subjection to the very same courts? Don't *your* ministers sit in the same judicatories with these very men, and give them the right hand of fellowship? Nay, sometimes assist at, and sit down to the Lord's supper *with them* also? Were they not as active as men could be, in settling a *small difference* with Dr. M'Gill, concerning some little inadvertencies in sentiment, and inaccuracies in language, about the death of Christ, which from the nature and extent of the subject, that great and learned man acknowledges he may have used! and on account of the dulness of his brethren, in not perceiving this, it was necessary for him to explain. Don't they deliberate together about the affairs of the same church? Exert their mutual influence to preserve her peace? Preach in each others pulpits, by mutual invitation, as brethren, and, as becometh brethren too, in the *same church-fellowship*. Don't your ministers use all their endeavours with the people of reclaiming parishes, to abide in the church? And for the purposes of *strengthening the hands* of the in-

truded, unsound brother, preach to them betimes, in order to cool their tempers, and keep them from seeking the gospel in its purity out of her communion? You see then, Sir, you are mistaken. If you allow that you are in communion with your own ministers, you must allow that you hold communion with the rest also.

“ Were it not for these ministers, you say, you “ would have left the church long ago ! ”

This I grant you, is the language of affection ; and such an affection, too, as I feel myself strongly inclined, in one view, to recommend. What more natural and pleasant, than to be warmly attached to our spiritual Fathers, under whose ministry we have been born, and fed ! But then, Sir, in the matter of what is sin and duty, in your situation, I suspect the language of scripture and reason would be different. It is only your *attachment* to these ministers, you acknowledge, keeps you in the church. Of consequence, their example prevents you from what you would otherwise reckon your express duty. You could not stay in a church, where so many unsound men are. You could not *think* of being in communion with them : but because these gospel ministers do both, you will do so too. This is certainly too much, and what neither they nor any other minister of Christ I think would wish. In such a great and weighty matter as the glory of our Redeemer, and the approbation of a good conscience, in forming our Christian fellowship, we ought to call no man *master*. They have their reasons for continuing in the establishment, and you have yours ; but they may be very different from one another. That church that comes nearest the word of God, and where her members are most *agreed*, in all the truths of God, and most steady in *supporting* and *defending* them, ought, I humbly presume, without a moment's delay to be yours.

And here, if I might be permitted, without offence, to express my sentiments concerning those evangelical ministers in the church, whom I much respect as ministers of Christ, I would humbly presume to submit these as my views. As there is no human probability of any deliverance being wrought for our mother church, by their continuance in her; as she is every year, growing worse and worse; as their example may be a snare to many serious people, and you once were of this number I perceive, who have no other reason for continuing in her communion, but because they continue in her, and so, in some measure, sacrifice the right of private judgment to their example; as their conduct, altho' quite undesigned, hath had its influence, in making many lose sight of all *consistency* in church-fellowship, and withhold themselves from encouraging those, who have already seceded from the present administration in the church; as they know not but an hireling, instead of a good shepherd, may be their successor in office, over those tender little ones for whom they have so often travailed as in birth, till Christ be formed in them; as, in a word, their present situation subjects them to many grievances and temptations, peculiar to their circumstances, I should reckon it a difficult matter, to see it my duty, to continue any longer in such an unpleasant situation. For I am verily persuaded, that in the late melancholy determination in Dr. M'Gill's cause, a fear of being deserted by suspicious brethren, who would go so far in that prosecution, and no farther, was the temptation which betrayed them into that most unhappy compromise. Now, however as he still continues to preach the very same errors he ever did, and so proves how much they were taken in, by his apology, is it not high time, nay *more* than time, for every friend of God and religion, to withdraw himself from such a connection? To judge for himself, and not rest in the ex-

ample of any man: but, by a clear and *consistent* separation, enjoy all the privileges of the Church of Christ, without offending his conscience or mar-
ring the edification of others? Nay, what do they know, but such a measure might produce a return of Zion's captivity, after which they have longed, but perhaps *now* looked not for?—A reviving in her bondage, so often the subject of their prayers?

The external hardships of the ministers without the church, is no doubt a discouragement; and these people are the worst enemies to themselves and the interests of the gospel, who, by their inattention to their minister's comfort, occasion such discouragements; still, however, a comfortable and easy situation, in life, is not once to be compared with faithfulness to our Redeemer, and the rejoicing of the Testimony of our consciences, "that in simplicity and godly
" sincerity, not with *fleshly wisdom*; but by the
" grace of God, we have had our conversation in
" the world."

Now, Sir, your 3d question, if you please, and then I conclude this letter.

Quest. III. What *object* ought we to have in view, in separating from the establishment?

I answer, precisely the recovery and preservation of what she had *lost*. This and nothing less, must be the object of every friend of God and men, in such a serious and important measure. Any thing short of this is *betraying* the cause, is running head-long into the very evils we called grievances, and pretended to avoid; is sacrificing the Church of God, which he purchased with his own blood, to the humours and tempers and vices of men. And who would not start back with horror at the thought? A moderate degree of acquaintance with human nature, could model our holy religion into a great variety of forms, to please the fancy and catch the humours of men, and attempts of this nature hath

invariably been the true cause of all the corruptions and abuses in the church, which have rendered separations from her so necessary. When therefore you are driven to leave one church for her abuses, I implore you, in the most earnest manner, not to suffer yourself, to be carried away with the multitude, into another connection, where perhaps you may be worse. And here the maxim, "Liberty without licentiousness," applies in all its force, and cannot be too carefully studied by you. Have you mounted the car of liberty, take the greatest care that you drive neither too fast nor too far, else you will most undoubtedly plunge into the hideous abyss of licentiousness. The horrid tumults and massacres by the French Jacobins may serve as an awful example of abused liberty, both to the political and religious world. Use not liberty then as an occasion to the flesh. You are leaving the church because of the errors that are taught in her. You will certainly join then with the society most distinguished for purity of Doctrine, and whose constitution is most *scriptural*, for securing it. With the mode of worship practised in her assemblies, you had no objections, only your soul was grieved at the profanation of her sacraments by the promiscuous admission of all sorts of characters unto them. What think you then of this most unscriptural novelty among Presbyterians, by which the Lord's supper is exposed to greater abuses still; I mean that distinguishing peculiarity of the Relief Scheme, their admission of people, of various other denominations, to the Lord's table, besides those of their own connection. This is licentiousness with a witness, has not the least shadow of countenance from scripture, puts it in the power of persons to profane that holy ordinance, whom they cannot call to an account, altho' afterwards ever so irregular, and exposes their discipline to additional contempt. If to these things you add, that

they are little more scrupulous in their admission of members than in many parts of the establishment, you will find your condition not much better with them. In admitting Episcopalians and Independents to their communion table, they have given our Presbyterian form of government a more *severe* wound, than ever it received from the establishment. And by giving out the privileges of the church to those who are quite beyond the reach of their discipline, altho' afterwards ever so irregular, this ordinance of Heaven ceases to be a protection to these sacred institutions, and men are made to believe it is liberty, to be exempted, in their own opinion, from obligations to certain articles in the word of God. From these hints you will perceive what a scheme of licentiousness this is, and how much religion must suffer in the issue. You need not leave a church then where you are bad enough already, to connect yourself with others, where you will be little better, if not worse. For my own part, I admire the original constitution of our national church, I mean, when her doctrines were pure, her worship scriptural, her government uninfluenced, and her discipline exercised with impartiality and vigour. To this constitution, in *all its parts*, every friend of God and religion, who allows himself to be a *Presbyterian*, is bound, by *every obligation*, to adhere; and the *recovery* and *preservation* of such great and precious privileges ought to be the object of every one who sees it his duty to continue no longer in her communion. My reasons are these, and as the matter is of such vast magnitude, you will permit me to solicit your closest attention to them.

(1.) Because the glory of Christ and his Father should be the great end of such a measure. But Christ and his Father cannot be glorified, if we do not study to recover and preserve, "*pure and entire*" *all* such religious worship and ordinances as he

"has appointed in his word." Alas for the inconsiderate rashness of multitudes about such a serious matter!

(2.) Because if any thing less be my object, then, if others be of the same indolent and unfaithful turn with myself, what is neglected by us, must be lost. If the next generation, equally remiss, drop *their* share, in a short time the world would lose our holy religion altogether.

(3.) Because this object is the most forcible and conclusive reason, in many parts, for leaving the church. In many places, I may enjoy the gospel in all its purity; and, if ease, private edification, and convenience be my object, it will be my greatest wisdom to continue there. Nay, it would be an absurdity to leave her. But if the transmission of the constitution of the church, *in all its parts*, to succeeding ages be my object, I must leave her, and join with those who avow this as *their* object.

(4.) Because without this you are doing the very thing you blame. The corruptions in the Establishment is the cause of leaving her, but if you do not adopt such a measure as to rescue the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the church from all these corruptions complained of, and secure them most effectually against the like in future, you are countenancing and promoting these corruptions; only with this difference, perhaps, that the mode of operation is changed, and the mischief is done before it be perceived.

(5.) Because I believe all those parts to be founded upon the word of God, and I dare not give up with *any* thing that is commanded there, Matth. xxviii. 20. John xv. 14. Phil. iii. 16.

(6.) Because faithfulness to Christ, to religion, to my forefathers, to my own conscience, and generations yet unborn, requires this.

(7.) Because I expose myself to the world, as def-

titute, either of understanding or sincerity, if any thing *less* than this be my object. To leave a church on account of the evils which are in her, and settle upon any plan that does not secure a remedy against *all* these evils, is at once giving up the cause, and affording occasion for the most dishonourable imputation to our own sincerity. For if we have been really aggrieved in our consciences with the dishonours done to God, and the departures from his word, in our former connections; if we have made his word our rule, in leaving them, and not been actuated, by an itch of novelty and love of change, although it should be to the *worse*, we will make his word our rule also, in attaching ourselves, only to such as have occupied the most scriptural foundation for remedying these very evils, of which we complained, and providing most effectually against the like in future. And here, you will be pleased to recollect what was the *object* of our forefathers, in exposing themselves to so many hardships, and sufferings and deaths, in framing and defending such a constitution. What made them contend so earnestly for the Presbyterian form of government and due exercise of discipline, in opposition to Episcopalians, Independents, &c. Not their own ease, you may assure yourself. Not a desire to catch the unthinking part of that generation, or chime in with the humours of the age. No, verily; none of these: else they would have adopted a very different plan. Like the promoters of the Relief Scheme with us, they would have taken the keenest Episcopalians and Independents into their bosom, and seated them at their communion table, because they *thought* they were the people of God. They would have wholly dropt the contest, about Christ's prerogative royal, as King in Zion, *then*, and perhaps *now*, the word of his patience; and made it their boast that they did so. In the rave and delirium of

misapplied *charity* and *catholic love*, they would have blended distinctions, where there were most *essential* differences: betrayed their cause to Episcopalians and Independents, and buried that part of the word of God that respects the honours of Christ, the constitution and prerogatives of his own house, in the ridiculous rubbish of *circumstantial*s. In the sweet and engaging effusions of their *boasted* liberality, they would have set their teeth on edge with a peculiar degree of fierceness against their brethren, who would not so tamely give up the cause, but defend the Presbyterian form of government and discipline, in their purity and vigour, to the very last: and, in the spirit of *meekness*, compliment the friends of consistency, purity, and the ends of edification, in church-fellowship, with the *lovely* epithets of bigoted, stiff, contracted, narrow-minded, uncharitable, unchristian: And what would have been *our* condition to-day, you may judge. Bigoted! I assure you, Sir, I find no body so bigoted, fierce, and unchristian in their behaviour, against those who differ from them, as the most zealous of these very *Catholic Brethren*.

I know you are persuaded of my friendship, and I think I cannot testify it in a stronger instance, than by beseeching you, in the most earnest manner, to pause and consider these things, and endeavouring to fortify you against their most fatal tendency. The state of religion among us, is melancholy enough, after all the steadfastness, manifested by our forefathers for its security; but had they adopted the plans, lately devised and pursued by their mistaken sons, with a keenness, which would do honour, to a much better cause, the condition of the church of Christ, particularly in her government and discipline, would have been horrible indeed!

Blessed be God, however, these were men of a very different spirit. They had an incomparably

more noble *object* in view. Embarked in the best of causes, they boldly stood up in its defence, and struggled hard at the jeopardy, and not a few of them at the loss of their lives, to settle the constitution of the church, upon such a solid basis, as to preserve the purity of her doctrine, the simplicity of her worship, the due vigour of her government, and impartiality of her discipline; all with this generous and most honourable design, that Christ's kingdom might flourish, that posterity might enjoy the benefit, and the church, quite free and unimbarassed, might transmit her ordinances, *pure and entire*, to the latest posterity. For this purpose, they bound themselves by a solemn vow, and engaged, in a national capacity, to maintain this constitution, thus acquired, pure and unimpaired, against all opposition; and so ought *we*, after their example. Now, Sir, these things being so, I appeal to you, I appeal to any honest or generous mind, if it does not very ill become such as are reaping the benefit of these exertions, to presume, from motives best known to themselves, but none of the most honourable, I am afraid, profanely to expose either from press or pulpit, these public transactions of their fathers, and endeavour to prepossess the minds of their people against them. This has been the practice of the keenest advocates for Relief; although it will require more ingenuity and penetration, than any of them have yet exhibited to the world, to refute the arguments in proof of the obligation of these vows upon posterity. And yet these are the men, and wisdom will die with them! Under the flaming pretensions of liberality and great love to mankind, they sap the very foundation of the sacred constitution of our church, and land their votaries in licentiousness. They affect to treat, with much indifference, the royal prerogatives of the King in Zion. They expose the sacramental sup-

per to much profanation. Steadiness to the government and discipline of his kingdom, although these be the protectors of his ordinances, they call want of liberality. And provided we be agreed in *love* to him and all his people, these less matters, say they, are not to be minded ! Such a solemn farce ! I ask you, Sir, saw you ever a more striking picture of Joab *smiling* in the face of Abner, and at the same time plunging the dagger into his heart ? To talk about love to Christ, and yet persuade people to treat, with disrespect, *any* part of his institutions, to call him Lord, and yet pluck the crown of royalty from his very head ! Ye are my friends, if ye do *whatsoever* I command you. Strange ! What is the world wandering after ? As therefore their scheme is *so* subversive of the government and discipline of our church, and the vast importance of securing and defending these, is so little regarded by many, I shall take the liberty of subjoining a few reasons, why they are to be revered and maintained *as inviolably*, by every friend of Jesus Christ, as his doctrines and worship.

(1) Because every professed Presbyterian declares it to be his belief, that these are as really *agreeable* unto and *founded* upon the word of God, as the doctrine and worship ; and therefore, he is as solemnly bound, to profess and defend *them*. Is it not rather singular, in the conduct of many sober people, that any reflection upon the *doctrines* of Christ will fire them with indignation : but let the rudest indignities be offered to the *government* and *discipline* of his church, and they will be meek and peaceable as lambs ? Is this like men who believe what they profess ?

(2 .) Because these are the very guardians and protectors of the doctrine and worship. Without these duly exercised, the doctrines will soon become corrupted, and if they had been respected, as they ought, we would never have heard of *visible saintship*,

as the term of any Presbyterian's communion. I defy any man to point out any part of the word of God in proof of such a scheme : but I have a very serious hint at hand, to deter any man from *adding* to God's institutions, Rev. xxii. 18.

(3.) Because all the parts of the church of Christ are so inseparably linked together, that if you take away one of them, or neglect to give it its proper place, you break the chain, you mar its beauty, the link itself will soon be lost, and what remains is in the greatest danger of sharing the same fate. Look to the melancholy state of religion among the dissenters in England, and learn experience, of the value of government and discipline in the church, at their coast.

(4.) Because the constitution of the church, in *all its parts*, was transmitted to us, at the price of blood, by our forefathers. We have it too in trust to transmit to posterity, and, therefore, from faithfulness to our Redeemer in *all things*, as well as to posterity, you cannot, nay, you *dare* not so much as *treat* a single article of it *lightly*, Mat. v. 19. To fill men's minds with notions, that it is *liberty* to neglect any ordinance of Heaven, as a circumstantial indifferent thing, is a piece of the greatest cruelty to them, and an act of *treason* against the majesty of the Most High.

(5.) Because it is natural for the mind of man to be very averse to the government and discipline of the church. It is hard to convince men, particularly offenders, that discipline is a *privilege* ; or that all due respect to Christ's government is *essentially* necessary to the preservation of purity of doctrine. Hence then the great need of maintaining these in their due respectability, and guarding against the remotest hint, that would lessen men's esteem of them. How iniquitous then, to countenance a

scheme, that, in the issue, threatens no less, than their *ruin*!

(6.) Because it is by a zealous care, to maintain the government and discipline of the church in due respectability and vigour, that the glorious gospel hath ever been preserved in its purity. And if you want the gospel in purity, *so* must you. I must conclude, else it would be easy to shew, by a series of examples from the history of the church, that in proportion to men's inattention to these, so has the purity of religion been lost, and perhaps you will not live twenty years longer, till the Relief be a melancholy proof of it. But wherever these have been maintained, in due respectability, purity of doctrine has ever been found.

Yours, &c.

LETTER II.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I Cannot get the 10th of August out of my mind, that fatal day to the liberties of France! when the New Constitution fell a sacrifice to the ungovernable licentiousness of the people, stirred up to such measures, by their Jacobin Representatives! Only figure to yourself the awful scene which that day exhibited! The city of Paris all in an uproar, Liberty run mad, like an infuriated Dæmon, enraging its inhabitants; the frantic mob in arms rushing up to the palace of their king; the artillery for its defence turned round against itself, the cannons roaring, the guards falling, and weltering in their blood, the turrets and walls of the palace tumbling down, the flames mounting to heaven, the dead and the living promiscuously hurled in heaps into them; the king, with his trembling spouse and helpless household, flying from their fury, and glad to take shelter under the slender protection of the National Assembly, while the mob pursues him thither, compels the Assembly to cast him down from his throne, and consign the whole family to imprisonment, till their future pleasure concerning them be known? Not even stopping here, as if they had not been sufficiently glutted with blood al-

ready, the walls of the assembly house must be stained with the blood of its own members, and their attachment to the constitution and the laws must cost them their heads.

What an awful example to mankind of abused liberty is this! Abuse the best of any thing, and you convert it into the greatest curse. The blessings of civil liberty are inestimably valuable; but if a nation, in quest of these blessings, shall violate the laws, despise subordination, and walk every one according to the sight of their own eyes, then every vicious passion becomes a tyrant over them, and in the rage of licentiousness they are oppressed under the worst of bondage. Better, Sir, be subjected to one tyrant, than a thousand.

The liberty, "wherewith Christ maketh his people free," is to be preferred to every thing. There is no temporal blessing to be compared with it. In proportion to the value of the soul above the body, so must the liberty, that respects the one, surpass the other. This liberty does by no means restrict your King, that his will shall not be your law in all things, nor exempt you from any obligations or services which he hath been pleased to lay upon you: But it consists in the enjoyment of the blessings of salvation, with all the privileges of the gospel church, freed from the corruptions and devices of men. It consists too of freedom from all these carnal passions, and dispositions that would induce you to accommodate any of the institutions of Heaven to the gratification of the humours of men. Nay, it consists also in a firm and uniform attachment to the good pleasure and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ in all things concerning his kingdom, which he hath revealed in his word.

This is the Christian's liberty, and, therefore, when any part of it is sacrificed to licentiousness, when the institutions of the gospel church are ne-

glected or modelled, according to the humours of men ; when people are flattered with the indulgence of any propensity of depraved nature, to the hurt of their spiritual edification, and disrespect for any thing in which the authority of Heaven is interposed, the church of Christ is then exposed to the greatest danger, and the souls of men to the greatest hurt. There is a strong enough propensity in the human mind, to regard the will of God, only in so far as it suits our inclinations and conveniency, altho' no denomination of Christians should adopt measures that have a native tendency to cherish this depravity.

Hence then the need of pondering well the path of your feet, that you may not be carried away by the noise of the multitude, nor *beguiled with the enticing words of mens wisdom, to use your liberty as an occasion of the flesh.* It hath happened from the beginning, that, in matters of religion, the majority hath been constantly in the wrong. And how can it be otherwise, when they are the enemies of God, and like not to retain him in their knowledge ? The man, therefore who is scared from what is *right*, because the multitude speak against it, betrays a very weak mind indeed, an ill informed judgment, and a most cowardly and perverse conscience.

Faults, you may assure yourself, there are in all denominations of Christians ; but where, upon due inquiry, you are satisfied the faults are fewest ; where you have the prospect of being most instrumental in building up the kingdom of Jesus Christ ; where the purity of the gospel is best secured against corruption, and your liberty consists in the enjoyment of *all* the privileges of his church, removed at the greatest distance from licentiousness, or the abuse of liberty, there, without hesitating, you ought to fix your religious connections.

“ Right, say you, if you would go a little farther,

“ and tell me where all these advantages are to be
 “ enjoyed.” Perhaps, Sir, this is asking too much.
 Every one must judge for himself. For my part I am
 quite satisfied and happy in my connection, and in
 my reply to your next inquiry, you will perceive
 my sentiments. I think I enjoy liberty without li-
 centiousness.

Qu. IV. “ Whether, in the present circumstances
 “ of our establishment, is a partial separation, or a
 “ fair and distinct secession, best calculated to se-
 “ cure the interests of the kingdom of Christ, and
 “ preserve the testimony of a good conscience?”

Both sides of this question have been exemplified
 by experiment. The Relief, on the one side, have
 made trial of a partial separation. The Burghers
 and Antiburghers*, on the other, have stated a fair
 and distinct Secession. In plainer terms, your ques-
 tion is this, Whether, in leaving the establishment,
 is it best to join the Relief or Secession? Now, the
 most natural and rational plan is to state a compa-
 rison between the two. To examine which of the
 two agrees best with the various parts of the word

* What a pity that such a distinction should have ever been
 known! That two such respectable bodies of people and Ministers
 should stand at such a distance from one another on account of dif-
 fering in opinion, about the genuine sense of an expression in the
 Burghers oath, only of four Burghs, I believe, in Scotland! The
 experience of little less than 50 years, have proved the fears con-
 cerning the evils arising from it, to have been groundless. An ap-
 plication THEN, or perhaps it is not yet too late, to try an appli-
 cation NOW, to obtain such an interpretation of it from the legisla-
 ture, as to satisfy the minds of both parties; and then a coalescence
 upon the most honourable foundation might be effected. In order
 to this, is it not the duty of both parties to make mutual advances
 towards one another? To endeavour to bury former differences? To
 relax that stiffness and distance that still subsists; but much more I
 acknowledge among the people than ministers; and where would be
 the harm of both meeting again for social intercourse and prayer,
 and of taking sweet counsel together occasionally to the house of
 God? and perhaps this would be the best method of introducing a
 reconciliation?

of God. Which is best calculated to secure the interests of religion; which comes nearest to the scriptural idea of liberty; and which of consequence ought by every friend of God and enemy to licentiousness to have the preference?

In a matter of such magnitude, you will not reckon it too great labour, I persuade myself, to examine very deliberately into the merits of the cause on both sides. With regard to the Relief, you will be much at a loss, as they have never made any judicial declaration to the world, what they intend, by what plan they mean to conduct themselves, and wherein they differ from others, so as to warrant them to institute a distinction. If all the advantages of religious liberty as sanctioned by the word of God be enjoyed by others, before they had an existence, why perplex the church with unnecessary separations? If not, why do they not give a fair statement from the word of God, what they do more than others? This is no more than fair dealing, and what any inquiring mind must desire, before he can make a judicious choice of any denomination. Their aversion to this is, in my opinion, a very material objection to that scheme. If their cause be good, a distinct judicial statement of their plan will promote its interests. If it be bad, their industry, to prevent an investigation, will defeat its own purpose. To toss out their Bible to the people, and cry, "Here is our testimony!" is too ridiculous and foolish. It is the the testimony of the great God concerning his eternal Son for our salvation; and therefore neither theirs, nor any man's, except in so far as they declare, in their own language, the light in which they understand it, and the measures they intend to pursue in order to preserve every thing in it, from being corrupted or lost by the devices of men. This is no more than acting like honest men. This is only doing justice to the public; and preserving a dis-

inction between them and Socinians, Unitarians, Quakers, Anabaptists, &c. who all profess to hold by the Bible, but take each their own way of explaining away its meaning. And who sees not that, according to their present indetermined plan, they may shift their ground at pleasure, they may depart from the principles of their original erection, as it suits their conveniency, and lead the people about in the dark, they know not where?

Mr. Hutchison, then of St. Ninians, it is true, exhibited *his* plan of the Relief, several years ago; but only himself is bound by that performance, since he wrote only as an individual. Mr. Bell of Glasgow, in a subsequent publication, flatly contradicted him in many things, and hath manifested to the world, that the ministers of that denomination are not *of one mind*, in very *essential* matters, among themselves, and therefore the poor people must be bewildered.

With the Secession, on the contrary, you are at no loss. The Judicial Testimony they have exhibited to the world, declares the reasons of their conduct, in stating a distinct separation from the establishment, what they propose; by such a measure; and the laws and regulations by which they are directed *. In that declaration to the world, they ex-

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* Mr. Hutchison's attack upon this Testimony, and the Secession at large, engaged the pen of Mr. Walker of Pollockshaws in their defence, and if you would avail yourself of a full and satisfactory statement of matters, upon both sides of this question, I beg leave to recommend both performances of that gentleman to your attention. First, his animadversions upon Relief publications: and then his candid examination of Mr. Hutchison's animadversions upon his first treatise. In these he has most effectually silenced his antagonist, and given such a fair statement of matters, as must convince every unprejudiced mind, that HIS is the best cause, and HIMSELF the ablest disputant.

See also Mr. Ramsay's review of the Relief Scheme, from whence

press their warmest regard to the constitution of the Church of Scotland, and that it was their inviolable attachment to it, in *all* its parts, and for the purposes of preserving these from abuse, and enjoying them in their purity, that induced them to state such a separation. The doctrine, the worship, the government and discipline of that sacred constitution, as contained in the word of God, and adopted in the standards of our church, were so dear to them, that they reckoned it their express duty *to come out from among and be separated from* these who had violated this constitution, and *obstinately* persisted in measures subversive of it. Thus the people who join the Secession know upon what precise ground they are going ; neither can their ministers deviate from their avowed principles, without giving previous notice, by assigning a sufficient reason for their conduct. But to proceed in the statement.

Relief took its rise, and received its name, from the first design of it, namely, the deliverance of the Christian people from the oppressive yoke of patronage. Mr. Gillespie being deposed by the establishment, for refusing to preside at the ordination of an intruder, upon the parish of Inverkeithing, remained for some time by himself. Not long after he was joined by others, who with him proposed to set up by themselves, and, under that designation, *relieve* all who were under the rigours of patronage. The cause was good, had it been managed according to the word of God. Had the choice of the pastor been restored to the regular church members, as their unalienable privilege. But by selling this to any per-

you will receive much instruction, and many very necessary and useful pieces of information upon the same subject. I name these as so many helps to you, as I know the conscientious man is desirous of hearing and examining all that may be said, both for or against a cause, before he form his judgment, or come to a determination.

son who would have it, for a subscription or contribution to a new erection, the cause is given up, the original institution of patronage is adopted, and the Relief fall back into the very system of oppression they condemn. Build a church, said the Pope, to a gentleman upon whose estate a church was needed, and you shall have the right of presenting the minister. Build a church, say the Relief to their followers, and you shall have the privilege of voting for a minister. Now I should be glad to know where is the difference? Money in both cases purchases the privilege. And do not the gentlemen in Scotland consider the right of presenting to a church as a very valuable appendage to their estates? The patrons, it is true, are increased in number, but the principle is the very same. Money or property purchases the qualification for enjoying this Christian privilege. In this case the establishment in my opinion has the preference. For if patronage, in any form of it, is to be admitted into the church, give me my choice, and I will much rather have one patron than 20, 50, or 100. One presents, and very frequently never interests himself more. The 20, 50, or 100 are managers, are elders, are every thing in the society, and it is at the peril of the minister whom they call, to do any thing contrary to their minds. And who sees not that this leads directly to a system of the very worst usurpation, and is an invasion of Christian and ministerial liberties of the most valuable kind?

Subscription entitling to the choice of a minister, what shall you say if, upon the day of a contested election, when votes were much needed, at the low rate of half a crown the head, whole families *have been added to the church*? The case is very supposable, and Fame lies if it has not happened. But be this as it may, in the country at present, I am told, they have adopted a new scheme for raising money. Be-

sides the privilege of voting, they promise the interest of the money subscribed, and as the device is new, although they have only the security of the subscription paper, many are foolish enough to add their names for pounds, who otherwise would not advance a penny. O how industrious to propagate their cause! I wish it were a better one, that their activity might be employed to better purpose. Now, Sir, all these schemes involve in numberless difficulties, and are directly contrary to the word of God. When the tabernacle was to be constructed, every man was to give the Lord's offering willingly with his *heart*, without expecting either privilege or reward for it, and so they did*. When the temple of Solomon was to be built, David made immense preparations and left instructions with his son and the princes of Israel to add to these; but all were free-will offerings†. When it was to be repaired, in the days of Jehoiada, *all* the princes and *all* the people *rejoiced* to bring in their offering†. In like manner, in the days of king Josiah, and in every other part of our Bible, where these things are recorded, contributions to the house of the Lord are all free, and no privilege in his church is either to be bought or sold. Introduce the policy of men into any thing that concerns the church of Christ, and you are in the direct way to ruin her.

Besides, these schemes, contrary to the very intention of the gospel, induce people from a love of *pre-eminence*, not the glory of God, to give of their substance to the service of his house. It is put in the power of monied men to form factions, procure voters, and carry matters their own way. The more serious part of a congregation, because poor, are hereby deprived of their privilege; or, if allowed it, may be out-voted by those, who, were it not

* Exod. xxv. 2. with chap. xxxv. 5. 20.—30. † See 2 Chron. xxiii. chap. xxviii. 20, 21. ‡ 2 Chron. xxiv. 5.—15.

for their money, would be admitted to the exercise of no such power. In fine, it is imposing upon the public, to pretend to relief from patronage, and at the same time introduce a species of it as fatal in its tendency as any. But "after the congregation is formed, the choice is no longer restricted, in any subsequent election. The *members* as such enjoy the privilege." A fair acknowledgement that your cause in the present instance is bad. After all, I am not sure of what you say. According to the tenor of some subscription papers, the subscribers, I apprehend, may exclude all but themselves, and even altho' not of their community, a subscriber may insist upon his vote, and who can hinder him? What confused, unprincipled work, on whatever side you view it!

Deliverance from the intolerable hardships of patronage is also the object of the Secession, and therefore, there is no need for the Relief on this account. For the uniform opposition of those ministers to patronage, who first stated the Secession, they too were cast out of the Establishment, and were under the necessity of instituting such a separation. Considering the choice of all their office-bearers as the unalienable right of the Christian people*, purchased for, and freely bestowed upon

* That the choice of all the office-bearers in the church of Christ is the unalienable privilege of the Christian people, is clearly marked in the word of God, and confirmed by the uniform practice of the primitive church. In the choice of Matthias to the apostleship, it is clear as sunshine, that the 120 disciples were the electors. The apostle Peter, under inspiration, suggested the necessity of such a choice. The 120 brethren propose two of their number as candidates, and after prayer, Matthias is chosen, and afterwards ordained. See Acts, chap. i.

In chap. vi. the twelve call the multitude of the disciples unto them, lay before them the necessity of deacons, with the services in the church that belong to that office, and specify the number. The brethren make the choice, and the apostles by prayer ordain. If the choice of deacons be so expressly mentioned, it is both fair and conclusive to infer the same freedom of election both of the

them, by him who sits a priest upon his throne, Seceders allow these privileges neither to be sold for money, under any pretence whatever, nor denied to a single member who chooses to join in their community. Aware of the fatal consequences of giving up a single jota of Christian privileges to please men, and knowing that by sly and imperceptible steps at first, the enemy obtains the advantage, they allow the most liberal contributor no more importance in the choice of the minister, or other officers, than the member who is supported by charity. For the erection of their houses of worship, the people give their *offering freely*, as to the service of God; and this surely is more like Christians, giving of their substance to the purposes of religion.

2. Another object proposed by the Relief was to rescue people from the dreadful danger of legal preachers, by offering them the gospel in its purity. This was doubtless a noble object also, and the church, which is most zealous, in adhering to the word of God in all things, in order to secure this singular blessing longest with men, is certainly entitled to our highest esteem. I wish I could say this were the property of the Relief. I refer you to Mr. Walker's Animadversions upon Relief Publications, particularly Sections 2d and 3d, for a specimen of the orthodoxy of the members of that body. The

teaching and ruling elder. But even here the matter does not rest. The word *χειροτονία* is well known to have been commonly used by the Greeks to express their mode of giving their votes in public elections by a shew of hands. This verb is used only in two places of the New Testament, and in both it is to be understood in this sense. In Acts xiv. 23. the word translated ordain, ought to be rendered, as on the marginal notes of many Bibles, "with lifting up of hands had chosen them;" that is, the elders, the disciples, not the apostles, being the electors. The other place is, 2 Cor. viii. 19. where it is translated chosen, expressive of the suffrage of the churches in their election of the companion of Titus, to carry their charitable contribution to the poor saints at Jerusalem. From these quotations, it is put beyond all doubt, that the pastor, elder, and deacon are the free choice of the Christian people.

Sermons of Messrs. Bain and Neil are proved, beyond a doubt, to abound both with Baxterian and Arminian errors. And if Mr. H—n so highly applaud them, without making a single exception, is not that declaring to the world, he hath no objection to subscribe their creed. Nay, is not this inference fair also, if several ministers of the Relief had the sermons of the last author circulated among them, to prepare for the press, is it not pretty evident these doctrines are not uncommon among them, else they would have used their influence to have suppressed such publications from the press; and in so far as their ministers have never in a judicial capacity condemned such publications, and pointed out their dangerous tendency to the people, are they not practically justifying them, and renouncing the very *principle* of their erection, the preservation of the gospel, in its purity?

A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Corruption in doctrine needs no more than a beginning, and if once it be introduced into a church, it will maintain its ground, and extend its influence. The introduction of error among Dissenters, has unexpectably proved their ruin. The Relief have no reason to expect to be singular. Error hath made too great a progress among them already, and many of their people are not aware of it. That several of them do preach the gospel in purity, I will readily allow. Others of them, I hope it will be as candidly acknowledged, do not. At any rate, the majority of their authors will, upon examination, be found considerably exceptionably, and perhaps had we as fair an opportunity of examining their pulpit exhibitions, several of them who pass for orthodox, would be found not to speak in many instances according to the Law and the Testimony. And how can they have any more chance for orthodoxy than our Establishment, when that is the source from whence

they receive almost all their preachers? Error in doctrine is a sufficient objection against any set of men, and for my own part, I would far rather continue in an erroneous Establishment, than go to the Relief, or any other denomination of erroneous dissenters.

The Secession, it is acknowledged by all, is distinguished for purity of doctrine; and therefore, there was no occasion for Relief on this account. Their ministers are convinced, I believe, that upon their maintenance of this, their very existence, as a distinct body of Presbyterians, depends. To the clear and distinct ground they took up, upon leaving the Establishment, their perseverance, in the enjoyment of this peculiarity, is, perhaps, under the blessing of Heaven, to be ascribed. By instituting Professors of Divinity too of their own number, and training up young men under their own inspection, they have always had the opportunity of checking any deviations from the truth of the gospel, in their earliest appearances, and of turning off such as were found obstinate. From past experience, they have every encouragement to persevere, and it is to be hoped will never intermit in their vigilance, to preserve the gospel, in its purity, among them.

Their ministers are now upwards of two hundred in Scotland. All of them are allowed to be sound in the faith; and, which is perhaps singular in the history of the church, although they have continued a distinct body for upwards of 60 years, they are still one in their views of doctrine. The Relief, not one-fourth of their number, nor continuing half their time, are in a very different condition, a most conclusive proof, even to an indifferent observer, of the vast superiority of the constitution of the one body compared with the other; and I appeal to you, if it be not sufficient to determine the question.

3. Now we are arrived at the only distinguishing peculiarity of Relief, and that is, their admission of visible saints, as they express it, to the Lord's Supper, to whatever denomination they belong*. And I appeal to you, if instead of advantage to the church of Christ on this account, they have not done her much mischief. What! say they, dare you hinder any of the Lord's people from a seat at his own table? It is Christ's table, not yours; who then gives you a right to exclude any of his children from it? A very pretty speech no doubt! and laid in such a manner as to impose upon the ignorant, and sometimes seriously disposed mind. But every person of understanding, surely, who knows his Bible, and his engagements as a Presbyterian, must be amazed at such confusion, and put himself upon his guard against such innovations. I would ask in my turn, who gives you a right to make *visible saintship* the term of church-fellowship? What is the passage in the word of God, or practice in any Presbyterian church that authorises you? Why make such a noise about it, when you have so little to support you in it! Who gives you a right to profane the seals of the *covenant*, by giving them to those whom you cannot reach by your discipline? Why retain the name of Presbyterian, while you take the most effectual method possible, to betray their cause? As to that part of the question, "Who gives you a right to exclude any of his children from Christ's table?" I answer, he who hath commanded me to withdraw myself from every *brother* that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition he hath received in the scriptures, concerning doctrine, wor-

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* See upon this, Mr. Walker's candid Examination, page 173 to the end.

ship, government, and discipline. And if that will not satisfy you, I shall be a little more particular.

The truth is, Sir, this is just John Wesley's scheme in England, adopted by the Relief in Scotland. Scotch Methodists then, is their proper designation, and then Presbyterians will know the footing upon which they stand. Are you an Episcopalian, and of the Church? said that shrewd and deceitful enemy to the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, enjoy your opinion, we don't find any fault with you on that account: only come, and if you have the love of God, worship along with us. Are you an Independent? As to these questions about Church-Government, I give you no trouble. If you love God, come and welcome to worship with us, and at the same time enjoy your opinion. To the Presbyterian, he spoke after the same manner. And thus he hath thrown a vast multitude of both kingdoms totally loose of all ideas whatever, of government and discipline, in the church of Christ. Error rides triumphant among them, and under the shew of great sanctity and love to mankind, that sly Arminian hath done more mischief to the interests of Christ's kingdom, than perhaps one hundred others.

And who perceives not the agreement between the two schemes? As to less distinctions, whether you seek to leave the church or continue in it; whether you hold communion with intruders and legalists by continuing contrary to the word of God in that church where they are the majority, and so countenance them in their measures, we make no matter. By building a place of worship, and calling a minister, we have declared that we could continue with you no longer. But although for conscience sake we have thought it our duty to do so, yet as we think you good people, although acting in direct opposition to what we reckon express duty from the word of God, and weakening our hands to strengthen our adversaries, come, and we will give you a

seat at the Lord's Supper with us. We will love you so far as to condemn ourselves, for not *continuing* to hold communion with those, who are still in the same fellowship with legalists and intruders: that is, for ever leaving the church. Where then I beseech you can there be any edification in people whose conduct is such a *flat* condemnation of one another, sitting down at one communion table? Would it not be far more agreeable to good order and edification both, as each have the privilege of the holy communion, among their proper connections, to enjoy it with such as are of *one* heart and *one* mind? Who walk by the *same* rule, and order, and who mind the *same* things?"

In admitting Episcopalians into their communion, this again is the language. " Altho' your curates and other clergy be not your own choice, but presented either by the King or Bishop, and you, of consequence sit constantly under the ministry of intruders, yet, as this makes no noise in England as it does in Scotland, we don't hesitate to desert our own principles, or betray our own cause, for the sake of a *brother*, at a time; we reckon many of you good people, and therefore, however irregular and offensive your conduct be in these matters, from the love we have to all who bear Christ's image, if you will come to our communion we will admit you. The government of your church by bishops, with our King at the head of the whole, is diametrically opposite to what we Presbyterians believe to be the only form of government our Lord Jesus Christ hath ordained for his New Testament Church, and a most shocking invasion of his prerogatives, as King in Zion. But what is all this, compared with love to *all* the saints? Only a circumstantial, indifferent matter. Love to Christ by an

“ implicit obedience to his will in *all* things, and a
 “ diligent care, neither to follow men, nor coun-
 “ *tenance* men, any farther than we think they fol-
 “ low Christ! Pugh! these are old fashioned, nar-
 “ row, contracted sentiments, quite unfit for this
 “ age of *Liberty*, and favours so much of a party
 “ spirit, and inacquaintance with the world, that
 “ they must be kept out of view. Love to the
 “ saints, love to the saints is every thing.”

Now, I ask you here, Sir, if words in our lan-
 guage still retain their signification, whether is it
 most like love or enmity to the saints, to conceal a-
 ny part of duty from their view, to make them trifle
 with it as an indifferent thing, or persuade them,
 they are doing God service, in neglecting to pro-
 mote and secure, as far as they have opportunity,
 Christ's kingdom and glory on the earth? How comes
 it to pass, that a breach of the seventh command-
 ment shall forfeit a seat at the Lord's table in the
 Relief, and the uniform abuse of the second be pas-
 sed unnoticed? For are we not commanded in it,
 to keep *pure* and *entire* *all* such religious worship
 and ordinances as God hath appointed in his word?
 But who perceives not its violation, in the most
 glaring manner, in admitting Episcopalians, &c.
 to their communion? No matter how much men
 violate that part of the word of God, and will of
 Christ, that respects the government of his church.
 No matter although they pluck the crown from off
 his head, and place it upon princes. These things
 subject them to no censure in our view, let God
 enjoin what he pleases in his word. We will a-
 dopt what pleases us, and reject what we dislike.
 Although we call ourselves Presbyterians, and pro-
 fess to believe that Presbytery is agreeable unto,
 and founded upon the word of God, yet in the
 great cause of love and Christian Liberty, it must be
 ranked among the *circumstantials*, that Episcopalian

and Independent saints may not be excluded from our communion. If this be doing all things to edifying; all things decently and in order, I leave you, Sir, to judge.

But their Catholic principle must go still further. They allow, I hope, that God hath his own people among Anabaptists, Quakers, nay, Roman Catholics also. Now if none of God's children are to be hindered from a seat at his own table, they will certainly make room for these brethren, and hand them to their seats. And as communion in the Lord's Supper is with one another, as well as with Christ the Head, if Relievers will be consistent with themselves, they ought, most undoubtedly, to sit down at the table of the Independent, to kneel at the altar of the Episcopalian, and assist at the celebration of mass with the Papists. For I acknowledge myself altogether at a loss how to admit a person to sit down at the communion table with me, with whom I could not join in return. If the distinction be so small between us, as to hinder him from sitting down with me, it is equally small surely to prevent me from communicating with him. And accordingly they proceed so far upon this principle, in allowing their people to join in the Establishment; although the absurdity of their conduct here, strikes the most inattentive observer; that their clergy, self-denied men! should extol this as such a great privilege to their people, and yet *themselves*, who ought to set the example, should be the only persons who are restricted from it! Sooner may the legs of the lame be equal, than this Scheme be consistent with itself.

But the matter does not rest even here. After you have admitted all these good people from different denominations, in opposition both to scripture and common sense, what do you in the case of their falling into sin? How do you preserve the sa-

cramental supper from being most grievously profaned. How do you satisfy your own mind, in the account you must give unto God for administering the seals of the covenant to those whom you could not reach with its discipline? Don't you believe that the government and discipline of the church are ordained of God for protecting the seals of his covenant from being abused? By what authority, then, dare you extend the one farther than you can exercise the other? I go no farther than the Establishment. An Elder belonging to her, asks a number of tokens from you, at a communion, for distribution. You don't refuse him, I suppose. You cannot hinder him from serving them out as freely to the people, as at his own parish sacrament. And every one knows what a promiscuous admission there is there; or supposing your own Elders to be the distributors. Several of these very persons, perhaps before they return home in the Sabbath evening, are awful examples of prostituted ordinances, to the scandal of religion, and grief of the godly. These ought certainly to be brought before your Session, to have their consciences dealt with, and the censures of the church inflicted upon them, for their reformation, and as a warning unto others. But you may try it. They are not subject to your jurisdiction, and were you to lodge a complaint against them, with the parish minister, you are not held in such high estimation, I assure you, as to have your complaint regarded. Thus God's honour is insulted; his most sacred ordinances are profaned; sinners are ensnared, hardened and emboldened in iniquity; and, by departing from the rule in his word, and violating the comely order of his church, you are the cause.

Nay, even of their own people, in general, so slender is the hold which they have of them, or the little sense entertained by them, of the vast import-

ance of subordination to the *governments* in the church, that discipline must be administered with a very sparing hand, else offenders would soon turn their backs, and walk no more with them.

And yet this is the *blessed liberty* concerning which we hear such a mighty noise! This is the deliverance from bondage, after which the unthinking world are wondering with such blind astonishment! This the great *relief* to minds aggrieved with the evils, so much complained of, in the Establishment! I know "I have not become your enemy, because
 "I tell you the truth. They zealously affect you,
 "but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that
 "you might affect them. But it is good to be
 "zealously affected always in a *good thing*. Stand
 "fast therefore in the Liberty wherewith Christ hath
 "made you free, and be not entangled *again* with
 "the yoke of bondage. For, brethren, ye have
 "been called into liberty; only use not liberty for
 "an occasion of the flesh."

Seceders, on the contrary, poor, bigotted, narrow, contracted mortals, are so much confined to their own party, that they exclude *all the Lord's people from his table* but themselves. The people must leave the Establishment, the place where their fathers worshipped! the old stone, and lime, and timber erected by an Act of Parliament, or decree of an Assembly, and consecrated by the *ringing of bells*, and submit to the government and discipline of the church of Christ as exercised by them, else you will have no sacrament there! And who else but the most open violators of scripture, reason, and good order of every kind, would ask or expect any thing else? Is it not an attachment to the church of Christ in all its parts, in its doctrine, worship, government and discipline, that is declared to the world to be the *cause* of the Secession? They neither can nor have a desire to force any body into their com-

munion. Every man is left to his own choice: But surely it would be betraying their own cause, and a direct contradiction of the scriptural idea of *church-fellowship*, to join in communion with any who had not the *same object* in view with themselves, namely, the glory of Christ in the preservation of *all the parts* of his New Testament-church. Knowing that as two cannot walk together except they be agreed, they are verily persuaded that they cannot with edification hold communion with one another either, except they be of "one mind, in receiving and ob-
 " serving; in keeping *pure and entire*, all such re-
 " ligious worship and ordinances, as God hath ap-
 " pointed in his word."

Unity in sentiment and design then is absolutely necessary to the purity of the gospel-church, and, by a multitude of evidence, it appears to have been the *great object* of the apostles and primitive saints, in their church-fellowship. "The thousands add-
 " ed to the church continued *steadfast* in the apos-
 " tles doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking
 " of bread and in prayer". The multitude that be-
 " lieved were of *one heart and of one soul*†. The
 " apostles confirmed the souls of the disciples, and
 " exhorted them to *continue* in the faith‡. Barna-
 " bas exhorted *all the saints* at Antioch that with
 " purpose of heart, they would *cleave* unto the
 " Lord§." The saints at Philippi are enjoined to
 " stand fast in *one spirit*, with *one mind*, striving
 " together for the faith of the gospel||". The great
 conflict, which the apostle Paul had for the saints,
 was, "that their hearts might be comforted, being
 " knit *together* in love, and unto all riches of the
 " full assurances of understanding, to the *acknowledg-*
 " *ment* of the mystery of God, and of the Father,

* Acts ii. 42.
 § Acts xi. 23.

† Acts iv. 32.
 || Phil. i. 27.

‡ Acts xiv. 22

“ and of Christ, &c.—As ye have therefore received
 “ the Lord Jesus Christ, to walk ye in him, *rooted*
 “ and *built up* in him, and *stablished* in the faith as
 “ ye have been taught,” &c. Young Timothy is to
 “ hold fast the form of sound words which he had
 “ heard of his spiritual father. And if any man
 “ teach otherwise, and *consent* not to wholesome
 “ words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 “ and to the doctrine which is according to godliness,
 “ he is to *withdraw* himself from him.” The same
 is expressed by the emblematical representation of
 the church as a body, an house, a city, &c. by the
 design of gospel institutions, to bring men to the
 unity of the faith, by the design of censures in the
 church, to preserve her pure. And by the reproofs
 which Christ administers in his word, towards
 churches which become impure in their doctrine,
 mixed in their fellowship, or cold in their zeal.

These striking proofs and examples, with the
 grievous abuses, and melancholy profanations, to
 which the holy communion is subjected, both by
 the establishment and relief, confirm Seceders still
 more, every day, of the propriety of the members of
 a church being of one heart and of one mind in
 their fellowship, contending “ earnestly for the Faith
 “ once delivered to the saints.”

Until therefore these objections against the relief
 scheme of admission to the Lord's supper be removed,
 they must condemn it, as altogether unscriptural,
 and very destructive of real godliness.

(1.) “ It has no foundation in the word of God.
 “ Mr. H—n has presented us with only one passage
 “ of Scripture; viz. Rom. xiv. 1, &c. and it is evi-
 “ dently perverted.”

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* Col. 2. 2—10. 1 Tim. 1. 13. 1 Tim. 6. 3—5. See also Eph.
 iv. 1—21. Rom. xii. 4. 5. 1 Cor. xii. Eph. 2. 19—21.
 Rev. ii. and iii. chap. &c.

(2.) " It is well calculated to encourage *Episcopalians* to persevere in maintaining their detested supremacy, and antiscritural ceremonies; since Presbyterians themselves, who have the greatest pretensions to strictness, consider them only as trifling circumstantialia.

(3.) " It is calculated to encourage those of the *Episcopalian* and Independent persuasions, to *persist* in their opposition to the scriptural government of the house of God, when they hear professed Presbyterians acknowledging, as Mr. H—n does, that it is only a darkly revealed, less important matter.

(4.) " It is likewise adapted to encourage professed Presbyterians, to consider the discipline, and government of the house of God, as a matter of *little moment*, not worth contending for; and it is well they are not matters of indifference. Any one may see with half an eye, that a notion of this sort is greatly on the increase; and it is the word of Christ's patience to oppose not to encourage it.

(5.) " It is adapted to render the generation careless, about the word of God, a few essentials excepted. And when these are undetermined, if once men are allowed to curtail, it is hard to say where they will stop. Some of them can declare openly already, that the New Testament is sufficient, they have very little concern with the Old.

(6.) " It separates between the *seals* of the covenant and the discipline of the house of God. On this plan relief ministers admit those to sealing ordinances, who, should they presume to exercise discipline towards them, would soon let them know that they had no connection with them. There is no warrant for this in Scripture.

(7.) " This plan implies that maintaining the detested *supremacy* does not deserve the discipline of

“ God’s house. Those who deserve discipline
 “ ought not to be admitted to sealing ordinances till
 “ it is exercised. But according to this plan, tear-
 “ ing the Redeemer’s crown from his head, and
 “ making it a trifling appendage to the crown of an
 “ earthly sovereign, does not exclude from sealing
 “ ordinances, and consequently does not deserve
 “ any censure at all.

(8.) “ It makes that which is confessedly so hei-
 “ nous, that it is better to separate than be guilty of
 “ it, no ground however of church censure. It is
 “ better to separate than be in full communion
 “ with intruders, and legal preachers; but these
 “ who continue in full connection, are cheerfully
 “ admitted to sealing ordinances, an evidence, that
 “ altho’ it is a just ground of separation, it does not
 “ deserve discipline of any sort.

(9.) “ This plan cuts off every thing, whether
 “ in principle or practice, from being any ground
 “ of church censure, if it is not inconsistent with a
 “ gracious state. And how many errors in principle
 “ and irregularities in practice must pass unobserved?

(10.) “ It is entirely selfish. If these things with-
 “ out which we cannot be saved are maintained, we
 “ are welcome to sealing ordinances, while other
 “ things with which our Redeemer’s honour is very
 “ intimately connected, such as robbing him of his
 “ headship over his church, is a mere unimport-
 “ ant matter.

“ In a word, this plan is well fitted, I wish I
 “ could say, that it does not seem to be *designed*, to
 “ throw the generation loose of any thing like prin-
 “ ciples, not only with respect to government, and
 “ discipline; but it is hard to say what length we
 “ may go in doctrinal errors also, and screen our-
 “ selves, by alledging, that they are only *unessential*
 “ and *unimportant*, and if once a plan of this sort
 “ gains ground, it will be no surprize to see a lit-

"the leaven leavening the whole lump." Mr. Walker's *Animadversions*, pages 194, 195, 196.

These are the glaring evils which the unscriptural scheme of Relief communion introduces. In this age of wonders and revolutions it is none of the least, that this should be a distinguishing peculiarity of a denomination of *Presbyterians*; and that the grave and thinking people of Scotland should not see through it. I am sure you must feel the force of argument in these eleven Articles, and be so convinced of the pernicious tendency of the scheme, as to wonder with me, that even its own connections do not perceive it, and candidly make recantation. There are such base characters in the world, it is true, as want to make a party, and become conspicuous, by any popular scheme, whatever mischief this should do to the church of Christ. But I am rather disposed to think, that the evils of this plan was not at first perceived by them, and many have unwarily gone into it from the most upright motives. By weighing these things, however, with impartiality I should think they might perceive their error; and you know it is never too late to abandon what is evil.

(4.) The open denial of the obligation of our National Covenants upon posterity is the only thing else I shall mention in this statement. You have seen already that the Relief avow this, and therefore I shall detain you here, only with a few sentences. I apprehend that, by necessary consequence, their plan of admission to the Lord's Supper, shuts them up to the necessity of refusing that these engagements are binding upon posterity. If all the Lord's people, although they differ from them in many things, are to be admitted, then beyond all doubt Episcopalians, Independents, &c. But our ancestors contended so earnestly for these very parts of the faith once delivered to the saints, which E-

piscopalians, &c. deny, as not even to love their very lives unto the *death* in their defence; and bound themselves and their offspring by an oath to God, to preserve them, in the face of all opposition. Now consistency requires that they must either renounce their unscriptural scheme of communion, or find fault with these public deeds of their fathers, and deny their obligation upon them. For if these Covenants be binding, then they are guilty of the most solemn perjury. They are breaking through the most solemn obligations, by exposing the government and discipline of the church of Christ to such contempt in reducing her sacred constitution to their most unscriptural plan. No wonder then, altho' they struggle hard to secure themselves from this charge. I should be glad to hear them rescue themselves from such an awful imputation, by proving from the scriptures that this is not their condition. Mr. H—n tried it; but if the next, who makes the experiment, have no better success, it will be his wisdom not to begin. Mr. Walker's Doctrine upon this, is in my opinion, unanswerable.

Seceders regarding these National Engagements, as necessary and seasonable measures for the maintenance and defence of the privileges of the church of Christ, against all her enemies, consider themselves as solemnly engaged to maintain and defend the very same. They are far from justifying every step, which the necessity of the times, perhaps, obliged these men to take, for rendering these engagements more universal: Still, however, with the propriety of the engagements themselves they are abundantly satisfied. If the enemies of Christ shall band together against the Lord and his anointed, is it not much more reasonable and proper, for his friends to swear allegiance unto him; and for their mutual encouragement and defence, to bind themselves, and their children, by a perpetual co-

venant, to protect his interests against all invasions upon them? If then these things be true, are not all in the Establishment, as well as out of it, equally engaged by covenant to defend the church of Christ? And therefore, no man, in leaving it, ought so far to betray the interests of his divine Master, and involve himself in the guilt of covenant-breaking, as to connect with those, who both deny their obligation, and destroy that very constitution they were intended to support.

Now, Sir, from this comparative view of the Relief with the Secession, you will be able to determine the question yourself. For my own part, I think neither the interests of the kingdom of Christ, nor the testimony of a good conscience can be secured, by the one; but both can be completely gained by the other. I am quite decided, that if the situation of a church be such, as to render separation from her necessary, the more fair and distinct the better. I am strongly impressed, on the contrary, that a more effectual scheme could scarcely be adopted for *ruining* the interests of the things of Christ, and ensnaring conscience than the Relief have devised.

My reasons of preference are these, (1.) Because, according to the present state of matters, nothing short of a distinct separation promises to be of any real service to the interests of religion. The trial already made by the relief is so unscriptural and dangerous to the souls of men, that I would much rather continue in the Establishment than join them.

(2.) Because there is express warrant in the word of God for a distinct separation, but not for the other, 2 Cor. vi. 13. 2 Thess. iii. 6. Rev. xviii. 4.

(3.) Because such a partial separation hath been productive of no real advantage to the Church of Christ, but of much harm. As a proof of this I refer you to the above statement.

(4.) Because if there be no cause to warrant a distinct separation, there is not cause sufficient to warrant such a partial one. As long as we can, with a safe conscience, continue in a church, it is our *express duty* to remain. But whenever she becomes so erroneous and tyrannical, as to persist in departing from the word of God, and oppressing his heritage, in *so far* as we continue with her then, we are partaker with her in her guilt, and therefore the more distinct from her the better.

(5.) Because every church, although settled upon the most solid and scriptural basis, soon degenerates; and therefore, in a measure that respects the preservation of the purity of the gospel, for succeeding ages, the most firm and distinct foundation is certainly the best.

(6.) Because a distinct separation subjects both ministers and people to far less temptation to betray their cause. I cannot help being of opinion, that the near connection of the Relief with the Establishment hath tempted them, in many instances, to make concessions they neither would, perhaps, nor ought to have made. Witness the fate of their synodical decree of separate communion from the church, after the termination of Dr. Mc—l's Business.

(7.) By a distinct secession, all the inconveniences of a partial separation are avoided. The constitution of the kingdom of Jesus Christ is maintained in its due vigour. The native glory and purity of the church are best manifested. The clogs and fetters of civil Establishment are knocked off. The temptations to which the church is thereby exposed are prevented. The laws of the Mediator's kingdom operate each, in its own place, and all, by their own force and authority. The daughter of Zion, no longer prostituted to the impure embraces of the

things of the earth, appears fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.

Your welfare and direction in the path of duty, Sir, is my only object. To my knowledge, I have neither mis-stated nor misrepresented a single circumstance. I wish you in your change not to change to the worse. In that case you may take a step in an hour, which may hurt your character, and create uneasiness to your mind for life. Beware of being duped into the measures of men, by *great swelling words of vanity*. Licentiousness, under the name of Liberty, is a singular calamity upon mankind, especially in the church of God. Be sure you have the authority of revelation for every idea of Liberty you adopt concerning religion. Let *Liberty without Licentiousness*, be ever your motto and your maxim.

I now conclude our present correspondence with an hint or two for your future direction. Having, after much prayer, and examination of parties by the word of God, cast in your lot with those, whom you consider as most faithful to the kingdom and interests of Jesus Christ in *all things*, let it be your uniform endeavour to preserve a *consistency* of conduct in your profession.

You are satisfied as well as I, that to ramble about from one party to another, to take the slight after every novelty, and to wander about to gratify curiosity, is more like *children*, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the *slight of men* and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to *deceive*, than men come to the possession of their understanding, and thinking for themselves, in the great business of their eternal salvation. You have been actuated by conscience, and a sense of duty, I hope, in forming your Christian connections; you are quite satisfied with them when formed; you enjoy all the ordinances of God without infringement; you can desire no more; and therefore can

go no where to be better. Besides, the same argument, that warrants you to leave the communion of a church, binds you to abstain from hearing her. If she be erroneous, you are in danger of her errors. If unfaithful, you are countenancing her treachery. If she be adopting schemes that will materially affect the interests of the church of Christ, your presence has much of the appearance of a concurrence. And if her members be in danger, your conduct is calculated, to make them well pleased with their condition.

But the matter appears to me more serious still. You have called a minister to take the oversight of your soul: Or, which is the very same, you have, of your own free choice, submitted to his ministry. That minister then, is the ORDINANCE of God, for your salvation, and on that account, if you expect God's blessing upon what you hear, you are to wait on him in preference to every other. Respect, too, to your own choice, and your own character, as a man of faith, with the solemnity of the transactions and relation that subsists between you and your minister, bind you to the very same. If he cannot leave you at his pleasure, without a sufficient reason, no more can you leave him. He hath certainly the strongest claim upon the constant attendance of all who put themselves under his care, so long as he acts according to the word of God, in order that he may give an account, in the matters of their salvation. In a word upon this; if you wish to profit by the gospel, abide by your appointed pastor. You are more familiar with his mode of teaching than with any other's. You are more likely to understand him better; and especially when he is discoursing in a train, one day's absence will be a very material interruption to your edification. And as

to the excuse of not making a practice of wandering, if the thing be evil in itself, one day is as much to be avoided by you as twenty.

" But then, I shall be reproached for stiffness or " bigotry, and therefore, to remove that reproach, " I sometimes go." Very compliant indeed ! By the same rule, you ought to associate with every rake, to avoid similar treatment. Hereby you acknowledge that you are not proof against a little reproach for consistency's sake : but will rather contradict your own understanding, than condemn the slander of fools, and the contumely of ignorance. You take the direct way of convincing such, that there is strength in their objection.

" But they come and hear with us : and, therefore, is it not proper to return the compliment ?" Most undoubtedly, if ceremony and modern compliment, which curses in its heart what it blesses with its lips, be the rule of Christian behaviour. If you and others were upon an equal footing, then the case would be very materially altered. If there were as little risk of receiving harm, by hearing with them, as they apprehend to receive by hearing with you, upon the supposition of your being in the secession, there would be a wide difference. Neither establishment nor relief, you know, have stated such a separation from you, nor made such a declaration against evils with you, as you have done against the evils with them. Themselves being the judges, they have no reason for any such measures against you. They know that they are to receive no harm by hearing ; but the truth as it is in Jesus for the food of their souls, and perhaps an hint of instruction concerning consistency in other matters.

But you are in danger of having unscriptural tenets rendered familiar to your mind : of influenc-

ing others to continue well pleased in hearing them, of offending others whom you are bound by very powerful obligations to please; of being reproached for your inconsistency, or of giving occasion to conclude, either that you have not acted from conviction in forming your present connections, or have begun to repent what you had done.

I conclude these hints in the words of the Holy Ghost. " Know them who labour among you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake *. Obey them that have the rule over you, and *submit* yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you †. I desire nothing more, than that you be found walking in the truth as we have received a commandment of the Father."

Now, Sir, divesting yourself, as far as you can, of partiality or party prejudice, I beseech you to act like an honest man, and friend of God. Try to listen to, and examine what is against your opinion, with as much temper, as if it were all in your favour. From a regard to the Redeemer's interests, and the testimony of a good conscience, let not the voice of humour or vain glory be heard: but acknowledge and espouse the *right* wherever you find it. Above all things, do nothing against the truth, but for it. Enter into no doubtful schemes, in a matter of such vast importance. Be verily assured that cause is *bad*, that would lead you to overlook, as a matter of indifference, a *single* Institution in the word of God. With death and the judgement-seat in your view,

* 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

† Heb. xiii. 17.

‡ 2 John 4.

consult the glory of God, and interests of his gospel in all things. And that He may ever be your counsellor and friend, you are always sure of the prayers

Of your humble Servant, &c.

F I N I S.

